

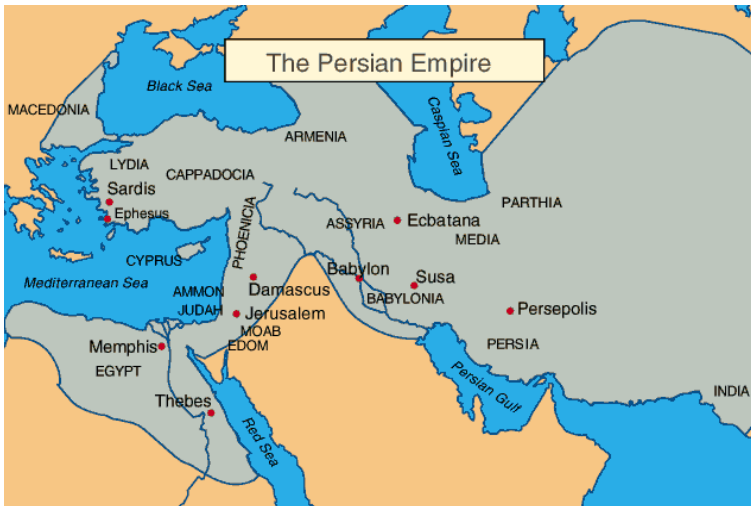


**MESSAGE ONE: THE AGONY OF CARING**

*Pastor Mike Chapman*

The mission of City Church is to *make disciples who make a difference... (md)<sup>2</sup>*. Today, we are going to begin a series of talks about a Nehemiah, a man who embodies the full measure of what (md)<sup>2</sup> is all about.

Let's begin by reading Nehemiah 1: 1-2:6 and reviewing a little history...



- 605 BC**  
Jerusalem falls to Babylon
- 586 BC**  
Temple and City destroyed
- 539 BC**  
Persia conquers Babylon
- 536 BC**  
1<sup>st</sup> exiles return to Jerusalem
- 515 BC**  
Temple rebuilding completed
- 445 BC**  
Nehemiah rebuilds the walls and the people

**DIFFERENCE MAKERS EXPERIENCE A HOLY DISCONTENT**

Nehemiah entered a world of **pain**.

*Nehemiah 1:4, When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. (NIV)*

In our culture, we often respond to anything that makes us feel uneasy or unpleasant by trying not to think about it.

The opposite of love is not hatred; it is **apathy**.

*Revelation 3:15-17, I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.*  
(NLT)

Examples of the agony of caring.

*Luke 19:41-42, But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. 'How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late.'* (NLT)

*Luke 22:44, Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

*Philippians 3:10, I want to know Christ and the power that raised him from the dead. I want to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death.* (NCV)

*Romans 9:2-3, I have great sorrow and always feel much sadness. I wish I could help my Jewish brothers and sisters, my people. I would even wish that I were cursed and cut off from Christ if that would help them.* (NCV)

## DIFFERENCE MAKERS RESPOND WITH PRAYER

Passion produces **prayer** and prayer produces **passion**.

*Nehemiah 1: 4-6, For days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. Then I said, "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, listen to my prayer! (NIV)*

Nehemiah prayed for **four months**.

What if your prayers were **recorded** for others to read?

*James 4:2-3, The reason you do not have what you want is because you do not ask God for it. And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole aim is wrong—you only want what will give you pleasure. (LB)*

We must begin to pray the **mission of God**.

## DIFFERENCE MAKERS TAKE ACTION

Nehemiah saw the problem, felt the burden, prayed with urgency, and stepped forward and took **action**.

*Nehemiah 2:4, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it." (NIV)*

Nehemiah was willing to **risk everything**.

He risked his **life**.

He risked his **position**.

He risked his **comfort**.